



Rafa Diez and Arnaldo Otegi

## The Bateragune case

On the 9th October 2009 the Spanish Police officers arrested 10 members of the Abertzale Left in the southern Basque Country. Spanish Government accused them of following ETA's orders to re-construct Batasuna, but soon different Basque parties and the Abertzale Left denounced that this group of people had been preparing the basis for an important debate, a new opportunity for peace. A debate about the strategy Abertzale left had to develop in the future.

Spanish Government's accusation is based on the interpretation of documents by police inspectors considered experts regarding Abertzale Left's strategy and history. This is the only and mere prove being presented by the Government. As it happened in the treason trial of South Africa against the Congress of the People, the only element of prove will be the ideological bias of police officers and interested interpretations of documents by securocrat elements of the Spanish Government through the Prosecution. As fifty years ago behind any document in South Africa there was a “communist conspiracy”, right now in the Spanish State behind any document or organisation there is a “terrorist conspiracy”. Court has refused the presence of diverse national and international witnesses who would testify about the debate those people were developing inside the Abertzale Left movement.

It is clear that this group of people had been preparing the base for the strategic debate that the Abertzale Left undertook, despite their arrests, on the following months. This debate was public and its consequences are well known. The Abertzale Left has opted for an exclusively political and democratic strategy and ETA has unilaterally declared a permanent general and internationally verifiable cease-fire. The Abertzale Left has presented Sortu a political party that rejects violence, and Bildu (an electoral coalition formed by Eusko Alkartasuna, Alternatiba and Abertzale-left independents) has obtained 315.000 votes and become 2nd political force in the Basque Country.

### Arnaldo Otegi Mondragon:

Is one of the prominent leaders of the Abertzale Left. He has been in prison since October 2009 for the “Bateragune Case”.

Arnaldo Otegi was arrested and condemned in the eighties for being a member of ETA. He served his sentence and was released on 1993. On 1997 after the arrest and imprisonment of the whole Mesa Nacional (chief executive of Herri Batasuna) Arnaldo Otegi was designed as member and spokesperson of the new Mesa Nacional. He has remained one of the key members of the Abertzale Left since then and he has took part on all peaceful negotiation attempts to solve the conflict.

He was arrested just three days after the official collapse of the last peace process, June 2007, and sent to jail to serve his sentence (until 2008) for an homage to Jose Miguel Ordeñana Argala (member of ETA killed by the BVE Spanish paramilitary). Previously at the beginning of the peace process he was also arrested and sent to prison, being released on bail.

But Arnaldo Otegi, Sonia Jacinto, Arkaitz Rodriguez and Miren Zabaleta are still in prison and on the coming 27th June they will be taken to a trial, with Rafa Diez, Amaia Esnal, Txelui Moreno and José Manuel Serra, accused of being ETA members.

The prosecutor has asked 10 years of imprisonment for each of them accusing the “bateragune” of being “the frame for the construction of the pro-sovereignty accumulation of forces under ETA’s orders”; furthermore the prosecutor accuses them of having as an objective “taking the political confrontation to its highest point”.

This new judicial attack has to be understood on the current situation as an attack on the ongoing process and as an attempt to put obstacles for its development. This process is unstoppable and this kind of juridical actuation can only be understood as an attempt of slowing its development, trying to weaken the Abertzale Left and introducing juridical affairs on the political arena.

#### **Rafa Diez Usabiaga:**

Arrested also during the operation against Batergaune, he is former Secretary General of the Basque trade Union LAB member of the WFTU. Long standing unions’ organizer he was also involved as adviser in 1987 peace talks developed in Algeria by the Spanish Government and ETA.

On the same operation, Sonia Jacinto, Arkaitz Rodriguez, Miren Zabaleta, Amaia Esnal, Txelui Moreno and José Manuel Serra were also arrested.

**All the accused have to be absolved and released to promote the peace process.**



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